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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SINGAPORE 000104

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SUBJECT: SINGAPORE DETAINS TWO MORE TERRORIST SUSPECTS,
RELEASES OTHERS

REF: 07 SINGAPORE 01145

Classified By: EP Chief Ike Reed for reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Singapore detained two terrorist suspects and issued a Restriction Order against a third under the Internal Security Act (ISA) in December 2007, the Ministry of Home Affairs announced January 24. MHA said the three men were involved in "activities that posed a potential terrorist threat." At the same time, the GOS announced it had released from detention in December five terrorist suspects associated with Jemaah Islamiah (JI) and one associated with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). All six are subject to Restriction Orders. The GOS also allowed Restriction Orders against five other JI members to expire. The announcement was carefully orchestrated to reinforce the need for vigilance and moderation while minimizing the potential to inflame communal tensions in multi-ethnic Singapore. End Summary.

New Detentions

¶2. (U) On January 24, the Ministry of Home Affairs announced it had detained Muhammed Zamri bin Abdullah and Maksham bin Mohd Shah (both age 26) in December 2007 under the Internal Security Act (ISA). (NOTE: The ISA allows detention for renewable periods of up to two years without trial or judicial review. The GOS currently is detaining approximately 31 terrorist suspects under the ISA. End Note.) MHA also issued a Restriction Order (RO) against Mohammed Taufik bin Andjah Asmara (also age 26). MHA said its investigations revealed that Zamri had become "self-radicalized" through "radical propaganda in publications, videos and the internet" and had influenced Maksham and Taufik. They had expressed a desire to engage in armed jihad. Their arrest comes less than a year after "self-radicalized" lawyer Abdul Basheer Abdul Kader was detained for making plans to join the Taliban (Reftel).

More Releases

¶3. (U) At the same time, MHA announced it had released five JI detainees (Hosnay bin Awi, Adnan bin Musa, Fathi Abu Bakar Bafana, Halim bin Hussain, and Mohamad Anuar bin Margono) and placed them under ROs. In addition, Mohd Agus bin Ahmad Selani, a Singaporean detained for his involvement with the

MILF, was released on a Suspension Direction (SD) in January 2008. The ROs of five other JI/MILF members (Abu Bakar Sedek bin Hashim, Mohamed Yusuf bin Mohamad Noof, Mohammad bin Hashim, Modh Abdul Rahman bin Baharom and Mohd Shafiee bin Osman) expired in January and were not renewed. MHA said the men had been cooperative in investigations and had responded to rehabilitation. The MHA announced that the five were determined to "no longer require supervision."

Support from Religious Leaders

14. (U) Local press also carried reactions by Muslim leaders in Singapore to the latest round of detentions and releases. The Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) -- a government statutory board -- said it supported the actions taken by MHA. MUIS President Alami Musa said it was clear that the new detainees had been misled "through unsupervised learning of Islamic teachings from radical propaganda in publications, videos and the internet." Musa further stressed the importance of learning Islam from credible sources and urged Muslim families to be vigilant about where their children learn about Islam and the kind of websites they frequent.

15. (C) Comment: As it has in the past, the GOS meticulously managed the announcement of the new detentions, coupling the "good news" of the release of the reformed detainees with the "bad news" of the new round of detentions. The government-influenced media also featured prominent members of the Malay/Muslim community speaking out in support of the government's actions and emphasizing that the radical views and actions of the detainees represented serious deviations

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from "true" Islam. The GOS clearly wanted to underscore the need for vigilance while minimizing the potential for any backlash from among Singapore's Malay/Muslim minority. End Comment.

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